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BALFOUR'S "FOUNDATIONS OF BELIEF."*

PLATO'S dream of the time when the philosopher shall be king, or the king philosopher, is not likely to come true, at least for many centuries. Nor is the reason far to seek: the philosopher who would fain be king must give his energies, not to the discovery of truth, but to the practical art of governing men and applying ideas which, in their large outlines at least, are admitted to be true; and the king who is ambitious to be a philosopher must be willing to subject all the beliefs ordinarily assumed to be true to a searching scrutiny, which will tax all his powers and create an ideal world which he can only hope to see realised after ages of progress. The problem of the pure thinker, in other words, is so different from the problem of the practical statesman, that they are not likely to be solved by the same person. This, however, is evidently not the opinion of Mr. Balfour. He seems to think that the king may be philosopher, though perhaps he would be very loath to admit that the philosopher would make a good king. The fruit of this conviction is his work on the "Foundations of Belief", in which, finding the two main systems at present accepted by philosophers who speak the English tongue completely unsatisfactory, he proposes to start *de novo*, and to set up a "provisional philosophy", which, though it makes no claim to finality, will at least be more satisfactory than Naturalism or Idealism. Now, it is worth observing, that in thus taking upon himself the burden of construction

*The Foundations of Belief: being notes introductory to the study of Theology. By The Right Hon. Arthur James Balfour. New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1895.